

MINERAL RESOURCES

Purpose

The County recognizes the need to balance the economic benefit of mineral extraction with the protection of people and the environment from potential adverse effects of mining activities.

Introduction

Valuable minerals can be found throughout San Luis Obispo County's physical landscape. Mineral mining dates back to the mid-nineteenth century when copper and coal were first mined. In the early 20th Century, chromite, manganese, and mercury were also mined. Today, mineral extraction consists mainly of sand and gravel mining. (Oil production is addressed in Chapter 5 Energy Resources.) Mineral extraction provides needed raw materials for construction and road base, as examples, and contributes significantly to the county and regional economy. If not managed correctly and monitored closely mineral extraction can also cause harm to the environment and incur significant public costs. Appendix 6 provides an overview of mineral resources in the county.

Relationship to Other Elements, Plans, and Programs

Many policies in the water, air quality, soils, and biological resources chapters of this Element and in the Agriculture Element relate to mineral resources. For example, mining of minerals can cause soil erosion, convert farmland, impair downstream water quality, create air quality problems, and affect special status plants and animals. Together, the policies in this Element balance protection of mineral and other resources in order to enable



**TABLE MN-1
GOALS FOR MINERAL RESOURCES**

Goal MN 1	Conservation and development of significant mineral deposits will be a high priority, but will be balanced with other County general plan goals and policies.
Goal MN 2	Significant mineral resources will be protected from land uses that threaten their availability for future mining.
Goal MN 3	Balance Mining of mineral resources will not adversely impact with sensitive natural resources and existing <u>adjacent</u> uses.

GOAL

1

**CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF
SIGNIFICANT MINERAL DEPOSITS WILL
BE A HIGH PRIORITY, BUT WILL BE
BALANCED WITH OTHER COUNTY
GENERAL PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES.**

Policy MN 1.1 Balance Test

Evaluate proposed mining operations in areas having open space, scenic, habitat, recreational, or agricultural value by balancing these values against the need for extracting mineral resources from such areas.

GOAL

2

**SIGNIFICANT MINERAL RESOURCES
WILL BE PROTECTED FROM LAND USES
THAT THREATEN THEIR AVAILABILITY
FOR FUTURE MINING.**

Policy MN 2.1 Protect Mineral Resources

Protect mineral and aggregate resources from incompatible uses in designated areas likely to contain significant mineral deposits in order that such deposits may be available for future use. Extract in-stream aggregate materials in a sustainable manner that balances the rate of extraction with the rate of natural replenishment.

↓ ***Implementation Strategy MN 2.1.1 Identify Mineral Extraction Areas***

Continue to identify areas where mineral extraction occurs or is proposed, where mineral reserves of statewide importance



An example of mining activities in the county.





An example of mining activities in the county.

exist, and where other significant mineral deposits are or are likely to be found. Amend the Land Use Element to include these areas within the EX and EX₁ combining designations as applicable.

↓ **Implementation Strategy MN 2.1.2 Aggregate Materials Management Plan**

Require preparation of aggregate materials management plans for watersheds with significant proposed in-stream sand and gravel mining. The management plans shall include, at a minimum:

- 1) Proposed rates of extraction compared to the sustainable rate of natural replenishment of materials for the entire watershed.
- 2) Best practices for sustainable operations that protect water and environmental quality and other properties.
- 3) Identify areas, outside of EX or EX₁ combining designations, where mineral extraction is not appropriate.

Coordinate planned development with development of the Salinas River Watershed Plan (See Implementation Strategy BR 4.1.2).

Policy MN 2.2 Incompatible Development

Protect existing resource extraction operations from encroachment by incompatible land uses, land use category changes, and land divisions that could hinder resource extraction.

Policy MN 2.3 General Plan Amendments

When reviewing general plan amendments in areas that contain mineral reserves of statewide significance and in areas where other significant mineral deposits occur or are likely to occur, give priority to maintaining existing land use categories that allow and are compatible with resource extraction.

Policy MN 2.4 Discretionary Land Use Permits

Require that proposed uses that require a discretionary land use permit will not adversely affect the continuing operation or expansion of an existing extraction use.



↓ **Implementation Strategy MN 2.4.1 Mineral Resources Report**

For proposed uses other than mineral extraction projects in the EX and EX₁ combining designation, require a mineral resources report, and require that the proposed use will not adversely affect the continuing operation or expansion of a mineral resource extraction use.

GOAL

3

BALANCE MINING OF MINERAL RESOURCES WILL NOT ADVERSELY IMPACT WITH SENSITIVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND EXISTING ADJACENT USES.

Policy MN 3.1 Environmental effects

Ensure that all environmental effects are studied before permitting any resource extraction activities (e.g., mining and geothermal development).

Policy MN 3.2 Reclamation

Require the ongoing reclamation of sand and gravel mining areas by implementing reclamation plans. In conformance with state law, require all mining operations to have up-to-date reclamation plans and adequate financial assurances to the satisfaction of the County.

Policy MN 3.3 Environmentally and Visually Sensitive Areas

Extraction operations may be established in designated environmentally or visually sensitive areas only when the Board of Supervisors determines that the need for a particular resource or facility outweighs the value of the sensitive land resource. Such sensitive resources may be subject to extraction operations only when no feasible alternative sites are available.

Policy MN 3.4 Site restoration

Require Site restoration and rehabilitation shall be required when resource extraction is discontinued as part of the reclamation plan as required by State law.

